

Lauritzen Prize 2008

Tina Gylling Mortensen

Award speech

Dear Prize-winner, ladies and gentlemen

"Little cat, little cat, walking so alone; tell me whose cat are you – I'm damned well my own" - wrote Piet Hein years ago in a Grook. But it also covers today's female prize-winner extremely well, Tina Gylling Mortensen, who has in every which way to be characterized as a unique actress, someone who manages to go her own way and to conquer new theatrical territory in the company of others.

At this year's Prize Committee meeting in **JL-Fondet**, we naturally discussed WHO should receive the various awards but we rapidly decided on today's prize-winner who had been previously considered several times. Time and again, year after year since she left the Danish National School of Theatre in 1979, Tina Gylling Mortensen has dazzled, shocked and seduced her audiences.

In casting our votes, Michael Christiansen here from the Royal Theatre who is on the Prize Committee said that he thought that Tina Gylling Mortensen should receive the prize, and I quote: "Because that witch Mortensen really understands how to use her talents and cheekiness to spit on us all, also after she has become part of the cultural Parnassus".

And spit on us she certainly does, with elegance!

Tina Gylling Mortensen is one of the very few to understand how to play her trumps provocatively and reflectively whilst aiming for the point of the soul that hurts most. The means is impetuosity whilst also being very indirect. In the wake of the often wildly provocative characterization as a Theatre mama with a capital T, there follows an impression of proximity and an almost fledgling-like fragility that in contrast never heels over and manages to keep everything together using a decisive inquisitiveness that affects the other actors and the audience.

A dialectic she has used again and again right from the primadonna of the gutter in "Train spotting" in 1999, the diva in "Casanova" here at the Royal Theatre in 2003 and seldom has the countess in Beaumarchais' "The Marriage of Figaro" got things going so

much as in her version. It was a technique Tina Gylling Mortensen also employed in Nikolas Bros' "Pride is Colossal" in 2005.

TV and the films have also benefited from her great talents but here again this year's prize-winner never performs at the expense of another actor,

She employed this character trait again and again at the Mammut theatre, the theatre managed by actors. Since its start in 1983, she has also helped to head it up and promote it. But this prize goes to her as an actress, not as a theatre manager even though under her management, the Mammut theatre deserves great and unreserved praise.

But you may well ask, what kind of style does Tina Gylling Mortensen employ? Her sense of boosting the tragi-comic - especially if it is fundamentally grotesque or absurd - is a phenomenon where the packaging itself comes in such luxuriant femininity that you cannot ignore it.

But above all, she is characterized by active indignation about unfairness, taken together with defence of things that are often skewed or everything that does not fit into the various boxes and systems. This is where she goes hand in hand with the reality expressed by Cocteau and Fassbinder among others - dramaticists that Tina Gylling Mortensen has also actively been engaged with on the boards.

In Germany, there is a kind of acting called "Expressive Art". An art form that has almost reinvented itself in recent years since it originated in the Berlin of the hectic 1920s. This art form is nowadays also used by hard-core Strindberg actors but in its time it was something that our own Asta Nielsen employed, not forgetting the much more topical Bodil Udsen, who publicly stated that in the latter part of her career she borrowed heavily from the genre.

In her own way, Tina Gylling Mortensen is part of this triumvirate. For in her best Medea-style à la Bodil Udsen, Tina Gylling Mortensen spits on us. Not to indicate contempt but to get us to wake up. Add a dollop of Asta Nilsen and they are up there with Witch Mortensen.

But just think about the word.

A witch can perfectly well be a kind and needy witch who can magic away the veil of stupidity from before our eyes. And the maternal part of the word can be just as well

regarded as a person who tries to make us wiser about ourselves, even if this involves loving but mental castigation.

In brief, Tina Gylling Mortensen is one of the few people who understand how to hold a mirror up to her audience simply to make us wiser about ourselves.

It is a rare ability. It is great acting and it is undoubtedly always most enjoyable.

The spirituality in all that you do and confront us with is absolutely unique, and you have our unreserved thanks for it.

Dear Tina. Congratulations on the well-deserved Lauritzen prize 2008.

Copenhagen 15.5.2008

On behalf of the Prize Committee

Theatre critic Lars Wredstrøm, Børsen (business daily)